

Special Education Survey of ABCTE Candidates

“Having a sibling who is developmentally disabled, I have for the longest time had a deep concern for the welfare of the developmentally disabled. That concern led me to think that by becoming certified in special education I could perhaps help their well being.”

Study Context

ABCTE designed a survey to gather information about the candidates pursuing Special Education certification and determine why they chose ABCTE. The questions on the survey focused mainly on the candidate’s experience, educational background and why they decided to pursue a career as a special education teacher.

Survey Participants and Questions

Out of 151 Special Education candidates, 50 individuals completed the survey; 44 current candidates and 6 alumni. Survey participants were asked a total of 12 questions and three free response questions to explain the following: what prompted them to pursue special education certification; what type of experience they have had working with special needs people; and what was their experience like going through ABCTE’s program.

ABCTE Special Education Candidates: The Results

The overwhelming majority of ABCTE Special Education candidates have experience both in schools and working with individuals with special needs.

- 94% of candidates who completed the survey indicated that they have had experience working with individuals with special needs.
- 88% of respondents have worked in K-12 education, ranging from 1 to 20 years of experience with an average of 5 years working in schools.
- 60% of respondents identified “Education” as their current or most recent occupation and 26% indicated that they are a permanent special education teacher.
- 30% of respondents indicated that they chose to pursue ABCTE’s program because they needed to earn their teaching certificate in special education while 44% indicated they had a desire to enter the teaching profession.

Summary & Discussion

Overall, because the overwhelming majority of ABCTE Special Education candidates have experience both in schools and working with individuals with special needs, we can conclude that ABCTE is certifying qualified special education teachers who are committed to working with special needs students. In addition, we can conclude that ABCTE’s Special Education certification is successful at helping Special Education teachers become certified as well as helping career changers who have experience with special needs students enter the special education classroom.

“I have worked with individuals with special needs for the past five years, including my time going through college, volunteer work, and currently as a special education/ linguistics teacher at a local high school. My late brother was also in a wheelchair from the age of 23-39.”

Are you seeking any additional certification through ABCTE in addition to your Special Education certification?		
I am not seeking any additional certifications	19	38.00%
Elementary Education (K-6)	26	52.00%
Mathematics	2	4.00%
Elementary and Reading	1	2.00%
Elementary, Reading and English Language Arts	1	2.00%
Elementary, Reading, English Language Arts, and Mathematics	1	2.00%

How did you hear about the ABCTE and the Passport to Teaching program?		
Co-worker	7	14.00%
E-mail from ABCTE	2	4.00%
E-world	1	2.00%
Friend/Relative	6	12.00%
Idaho State Board of Education	5	10.00%
Information Session	3	6.00%
Internet/Website	4	8.00%
News/Newspaper	6	12.00%
Prior Certification at ABCTE	1	2.00%
Radio	2	4.00%
School District	5	10.00%
School Site/Supervisor	6	12.00%
University	2	4.00%

In your own words, please explain what prompted you to pursue your Special Education certification?		
ABCTE specific	3	6.00%
Already teacher but wanted to work with children with special needs	2	4.00%
Wanted to enter teaching	6	12.00%
Wanted to enter teaching, specifically in high need area	2	4.00%
Wanted to enter teaching, specifically to teach Special Education	14	28.00%
Wanted to improve skills	1	2.00%
Needed certification to retain position	15	30.00%
Wanted to become a full time teacher	3	6.00%
No response	4	8.00%

If Special Education certification was not available through ABCTE, would you have pursued certification through another means? Please explain		
No	9	18.00%
Yes	28	56.00%
Maybe	11	22.00%
No Response	2	4.00%

Are you currently or have you previously had experience working with individuals who have special needs, either formally or informally? Please explain.		
No	1	2.00%
Yes	47	94.00%
No response	2	4.00%

Please explain.		
Family member with special needs	3	6.00%
Family member with special needs and formally	3	6.00%
Formally but in a setting other than K-12 education	12	24.00%
Informally	2	4.00%
Teacher	16	32.00%
Other educator (paraprofessional/assistant/substitute)	11	22.00%

Do you currently or have you previously worked in K-12 education?		
No response	2	4.00%
No, do not work in K-12 education	6	12.00%
Yes, as a paraprofessional	8	16.00%
Yes, as a permanent general education teacher	5	10.00%
Yes, as a permanent special education teacher	13	26.00%
Yes, as a substitute	8	16.00%
Yes, as a teacher's aide/assistant	3	6.00%
Yes, in another role	5	10.00%

Another role (Please explain)	
Volunteer	2
Aide	1
Coach/Assistant	2

Approximately how long have you worked in K-12 education?	
Number of Respondents with experience in K-12 education	44
Range:	1 to 20 years
Average	5 years

Which of the following components of the Passport to Teaching program have you completed/submitted? Please check all that apply.		
Have not completed/submitted any of the listed items	7	14.00%
Submitted transcript from college/university	30	60.00%
Submitted background check	24	48.00%
Taken the professional teaching knowledge exam	18	36.00%
Taken the multiple subject exam	16	32.00%
Taken the special education Exam	8	16.00%

How would you rate your interaction with ABCTE representatives?		
No response	2	4.00%
Have not interacted with ABCTE representatives	1	2.00%
Not at all helpful	6	12.00%
Average/Neutral	11	22.00%
Somewhat helpful	13	26.00%
Very helpful	17	34.00%

Would you recommend ABCTE and Passport to Teaching to a friend seeking Special Education certification? Please explain.		
No	10	20.00%
Maybe	9	18.00%
Yes	29	58.00%
No response	2	4.00%